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HIGHLIGHTS FROM MOROCCO

Best Microentrepreneur Superior Award



USAID Director Monica Stein-Olson (right) with Prime Minister Driss Jettou (center) and activity manager Jamal Dadi (left). (Photo: USAID)

USAID/Morocco Director, Monica Stein-Olson, attended the First Microfinance Forum of the Moroccan Federation of Microfinance Associations, in Marrakech from November 30 to December 2. To highlight this occasion, the UNDP organized a national contest to select the best microentrepreneur from a pool of micro credit program beneficiaries throughout the country.

The Moroccan Prime Minister, Driss Jettou, was on hand to present the Superior Award to a young microentrepreneur who borrowed \$2,000 to set up a rural inn in southern Morocco. The loan was granted by INMAA, a Moroccan NGO supported under our USAID microfinance program which focuses on strengthening rural microfinance activities in the Deraa region. Leveraging USAID funds totaling more than \$440,000, INMAA became the first microfinance association to operate in the Deraa region, a poor, rural, landlocked area defined by high mountains, oasis and desert landscapes.

US Ambassador visits USAID-equipped multimedia lab in a southern Morocco middle school

On a recent visit to the southeastern Moroccan town of Errachidia, U.S. Ambassador to Morocco, Thomas Riley, inaugurated the new USAID-financed multimedia laboratory in Moulay Rachid Middle School. The laboratory is comprised of ten computers networked through a local server to the internet. This laboratory is part of a larger USAID initiative to support the Government of Morocco in its recently launched effort to equip more than 8,000 of Morocco's primary and secondary schools nationwide. USAID/Morocco is developing pilot materials and strategies to help teachers use information and communications technologies (ICT) in an effort to strengthen the quality and relevance of their instruction. Many teachers in USAID-supported middle schools, located in four key regions of the country, have already begun to train their colleagues in the use of ICT in the classroom and are using their new skills to design lessons and pedagogical material to enrich their teaching.



On December 1st, a USAID delegation led by USAID/Morocco Director, Monica Stein-Olson, visited the province of El Haouz to observe MEPI-funded activities implemented by Helen Keller International (HKI). After a courtesy call on the Governor of El Haouz, the team visited four out of 16 target rural communities benefiting from MEPI assistance through HKI. The team observed first hand the positive impact of the program and the enthusiasm of various association members which was underscored by their voiced commitments to sustain project activities. A considerable number of women expressed their happiness at having the opportunity to meet for literacy classes in order to learn to read, write, and for some, to participate in a modest business.



From December 12-13, staff from USAID and the Embassy visited a Global Rights project in the southern Moroccan village of Zagora to assess program impact. Global Rights has partnered with a local NGO, ADEDRA, to implement a human and legal rights education program for women. The team attended a crowded session for illiterate women to learn about their rights and the new family code. The following day, they attended a training session for literacy facilitators who work to incorporate women's rights training into their literacy sessions. Both sessions demonstrated the strength of the Global Rights methodology which supports building capacity among local NGOs who are best placed to carry out the training programs.



Eye on Morocco

Morocco Risks Water Shortage in the Future

Speaking at the UN Climate Conference last week, the Moroccan Minister of Environment stated that Morocco will face, in the upcoming years, a dire situation in terms of water resources. North Africa and the Mediterranean are among the regions that will receive the least amount of rainfall in the near future, and they might incur warming of up to 2 to 4 degrees Celsius during the coming decades.

While it is only a "small source" of greenhouse gas, Morocco has fulfilled its commitments to the international community and is now "preparing not only to elaborate its greenhouse gas inventory (in implementation of the Kyoto Protocol), but also to set up an effective strategy to bring down these gases."

Over US\$ 2.5 Million Raised to Fight Aids in Morocco

More than US\$ 2.5 million were raised to help fight HIV/AIDS on December 16th during "Sidaction 2005", a *soirée* hosted by Television. This amount could increase as contributions continue to be made by associations and individuals. The show was organized as part of the anti-AIDS campaign that took place from December 2 through 16 in order to raise funds to help AIDS-affected people and associations working to mitigate the fall-outs of the disease.

The main AIDS NGO, ALCS, sponsored the fund-raising show held under the Patronage of King Mohammed VI. The funds will be used to take care of people living with HIV, to help prevent the further spread of the disease, and to conduct awareness promotion campaigns to lift the stigma attached to the disease and the HIV screening process.

According to Nadia Bezaad, Chair of the Pan-African Organization against AIDS, some 17,719 people were HIV positive, including 1,719 AIDS cases as of August 2005 in Morocco. Heterosexual relations are the most prevalent mode of transmission, accounting for over 70% of the cases. The number of people undergoing treatment is estimated at 700 patients. Treatment costs have dropped from \$1,100 to \$88 per month thanks to the development of "generics" and NGO support.



Events for January 2006:

- Launch of the new rural tourism and the investment portal web sites
- Cisco Academy graduation ceremony
- Business Environment Program Launch
- Economic Growth Roundtable with partners